

HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR ENDORSEMENTS OF JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

POLICIES

I. GOALS

The principal goal of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey (HBA) in endorsing candidates for judgeships is to insure the appointment of qualified hispanic judges to the New Jersey Superior Court, the New Jersey Administrative Law Court, the New Jersey Tax Court, the various municipal courts, the Federal District Court for the district of New Jersey, and the Federal Administrative Law Courts. The HBA endorses candidates who have demonstrated a commitment to equal justice for all litigants and who have been involved in, supportive of, and responsive to Hispanic issues, needs and concerns.

II. GUIDELINES

A. Criteria for endorsement

1. HBA Membership: Membership in the HBA is required for endorsement.

2. Qualifications: The following factors will be considered in evaluating a candidate for HBA endorsement:

- a. the extent to which a candidate has been involved in, supportive of and responsive to issues affecting the Hispanic community in New Jersey
- b. integrity and character
- c. litigation, adjudicative, administrative and professional experience
- d. scholarship and communication skills (oral and written)
- e. demonstrated commitment to the concept of equal opportunity and equal justice under law
- f. judicial temperament
- g. stamina

h. common sense

3. Statutory Criteria: The HBA will only endorse candidates who satisfy the statutory requirements for the judicial position sought.

B. Endorsement Decision

The HBA will decide to endorse a candidate or not endorse based on the above criteria. There will be no levels of ratings of candidates (e.g., qualified, very qualified, etc.) If the HBA decides not to endorse a candidate, it will generally take no position as to the candidate's appointment. However the HBA may decide to oppose a candidate whether or not that candidate has sought HBA's endorsement if it determines that the candidate's appointment would be contrary to the interests of the Hispanic community in New Jersey.

C. Number of Endorsements per judicial vacancy

The HBA will endorse as many candidates for a judgeship as it deems deserving of endorsement.

PROCEDURES

I. Persons seeking endorsement must comply with the following procedures:

A. Inform an HBA officer, board member, or the HBA Judicial Appointments Committee Chairperson of his/her interest in obtaining the HBA's endorsement. A copy of these guidelines and the HBA questionnaire will be provided.

B. Forward the following information to the HBA Judicial Appointments Committee Chairperson:

1. the judicial position sought;
2. the statutory requirements for the position and/or the vacancy announcement reflecting the requirements of the judicial position;
3. date by which the endorsement for the appointment must be received in order to be considered;
4. name, title and address of the person to whom the endorsement letter should be sent;
5. the candidate's resume and other materials relevant to the candidate's qualifications;

6. the completed HBA questionnaire.

II. HBA CONSIDERATION OF THE REQUEST FOR ENDORSEMENT

A. Upon receipt of all the above information, the HBA Judicial Appointments Committee may request further information from the candidate and/or may solicit information about the candidate from HBA members who know the candidate and from other sources who have relevant information about the candidate.

B. The HBA Judiciary Committee shall distribute the candidate's information to the HBA Board for consideration at its next scheduled Board meeting. The HBA President shall place the matter of the candidate's endorsement on the Board meeting agenda.

C. The HBA President will provide the candidate with written notification of the HBA's decision, and with a copy of the letter of endorsement.

III. Confidentiality

All documents submitted to the HBA for consideration will be held and treated in strict confidence. Before any materials submitted by a candidate will be given to any individual other than an HBA officer, Board member or judicial appointments committee member, permission will be obtained from the candidate.

Guidelines for Candidates Seeking Judicial Appointments

The appointments of candidates to Superior Court, while presented as non-political, is parallel to a campaign in the particular activities ensued.

A candidate must be prepared to undergo a grueling and sometimes emotionally draining experience. It is important to garner strength, objectivity and maintain persistence throughout the process.

FACTS

Eligibility

The legal requirement for Superior Court is admission in the State Bar for a minimum of 10 years. However, there are additional characteristics that will be sought in the process.

These are:

1. Personal and professional integrity
2. Litigation experience and a high degree of legal knowledge
3. Financial responsibility
4. High moral standards
5. Community service
6. Mental and physical health

It is therefore critical that a candidates take careful stock of these characteristics and assess how they fare in all areas.

Candidates must also be prepared to produce references that will corroborate that all of these characteristics are in fact evident.

Process

1. Obtain judicial questionnaire from Governor's Counsel Office
2. Interview and get the endorsement of your local Senators.
You will have to be sponsored by them.
3. Seek the endorsement of your County Political Committee (Republican or Democrat.).
4. Begin to organize a letter writing campaign. These should be sent in intervals over a 6 month period. They should come from:
 - Employers
 - Friends
 - Organizations - *County Bar Association, Community Orgs.*
 - Elected Officials - *Local State Senators*
 - Other pertinent people - *Professional Affiliations*
5. If you are considered a serious candidate you will be interviewed by the Governor's Counsel.
6. You will be given a police questionnaire to complete if you move to the next phase. Your finances (especially taxes) have to be in impeccable status.
7. You will get a physical exam (when this happens you know you are a serious candidate!).
8. You will be interviewed by the County Bar's Judicial Screening Committee. A positive recommendation will influence the next step which is an interview with the State Bar Judicial Screening Committee.

9. If all these phases clear, the Governor will nominate you for consideration by the Senate Judicial Committee. If the Committee votes in favor of your candidacy, you will be presented to the full Senate for Confirmation.
10. If all goes well. The final step is the swearing in.

The most critical point is that throughout the process you have to keep objective and focused. Be prepared to counter any obstacles that are presented.

Have a group of advisors that you can consult with and that can help facilitate any problems.